

Seeking Revival

DAY 4 — PUTTING REVIVAL INTO PRACTICE

“Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures” (James 4:2, 3).

Picture the Possibilities

Imagine that someone gives a revival sermon in your church. With a final appeal, the preacher invites listeners to accept Jesus and follow Him always. Maybe no one responds. Maybe a few. Maybe many. Since God created humans with free choice, we cannot take credit for how others respond to an invitation. Still, when many accept God’s message and put it into practice—whether because of public preaching, personal Bible studies, friendship evangelism, or divinely appointed surprises—then our witness is clearly successful. This kind of effectiveness is a gift of the Holy Spirit. We stand back—amazed—and watch God perform miracles.

But too often our Christian lives are less than effective. This doesn’t mean our church programs and outreach plans are in vain. The Lord has surely blessed—as far as possible—our sincere human efforts. But how much greater could our experience be if we received the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit? Only God knows the possibilities! Preacher Henry T. Blackaby writes, “He will accomplish more in six months through a people yielded to Him than we could in sixty years in our own strength and wisdom” (Blackaby, *Experiencing God*, p. 108, revised edition).

Praying for revival is essential, but we can’t stop there. I invite you to take the necessary steps to actually *experience* personal revival. With God’s blessing, your life can become more powerful and fulfilling than ever before. Your home and church can also experience new life.

What’s Missing?

First, some questions: What is the center of all our problems? Is it spiritual? Could our lack of the Holy Spirit lie at the root of our lukewarm Christian experience? If the answer is yes, then *why* do we lack the Holy Spirit in our lives?

The Bible’s answer: “Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures” (James 4:2, 3). As we learned in the reading for Day 1, God invites us to continually *ask* for the Holy Spirit in our lives. “Why do we not hunger and thirst for the gift of the Spirit, since this is the means by which we are to receive power? Why do we not talk of it, pray for it, preach concerning it?” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 22).

James also suggests that we do not receive when we “ask amiss.” Perhaps he means that God cannot bless when our minds are set on “things of the flesh.” Paul explains, “For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Romans 8:5, 6).

What is the “carnal mind” that Paul speaks of? Actually, God’s Word describes three groups of people and their relationship to Him. Within each group are many variations depending on parental training, inherited character, self-control, age, culture, education, and so on. But despite these differences, we find just three basic groups: the “natural” or “worldly” man, the “spiritual” or “spirit-filled” man, and the “carnal” man or person “of the flesh.”

These three groups are described in 1 Corinthians 2:14-16 and 3:1-4. For now we’ll just mention natural man in passing; he lives in the world and does not yet have a relationship with God. Church members belong to the other two groups, and a quick glance at each description will help reveal where the problem is mainly hidden. The

question is, which group do I belong to? A brief examination should help with self-diagnosis—keeping in mind that we want to look at our own lives, not the lives of others! What kind of person are you?

Natural: Has no relationship with God. He “does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Spiritual: Has a full, genuine relationship with God. When we are spiritual, “we have the mind [Spirit] of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16).

Carnal: Has a feigned or divided relationship with God. “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:1).

Coming up on Day 5: What is the difference between a spiritual and a carnal Christian?

Praying God’s Word

The Holy Spirit directs our thoughts.

“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit” (Romans 8:5, ESV).

Father, we know that we are either under the influence of our flesh or the Holy Spirit. Please make us spiritual Christians and set our minds on the things of the Spirit.

We are no longer at the mercy of our lusts.

“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16).

Lord, thank You that the Holy Spirit breaks the power of sin in our lives. Please grow the fruit of the Spirit in our hearts. We thank You for this wonderful promise.

The Spirit delivers us from condemnation.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:1, 2).

Father, what a blessing to know that the bondage of sin is broken when we live in the Holy Spirit. Thank You that Christ took our guilt upon Himself and freed us from sin and death.

More Prayer Suggestions

Thanks and Praise: Give thanks for specific blessings and praise God for His goodness.

Confession: Take a few minutes for private confession and thank God for His forgiveness.

Guidance: Ask God to grant wisdom for current challenges and decisions.

Our Church: Ask God to bless the efforts of our local, regional, and world church.

Local Requests: Pray for current needs of church members, family, and neighbors.

Listen and Respond: Take time to listen for God’s voice and respond in praise or song.

Song Suggestions

SDA Hymnal: Lord, I Want to Be a Christian (#319); Power in the Blood (#294); Showers of Blessing (#195); Leaning on the Everlasting Arms (#469). *Other Songs:* I Have Decided to Follow Jesus; Shine, Jesus, Shine.